

# Preparation Tips

## Thawing Frozen Meat, Poultry, and Fish

To avoid spoilage or serious foodborne illness, meat, poultry, and fish must be properly handled during thawing, preparation, cooking, cooling, and serving.

Frozen meat, poultry, and fish must be received and stored hard-frozen at 0 °F or below, until removed for thawing and cooking.

### Directions for Thawing

1. **ALWAYS** wash hands and all surfaces **BEFORE** and **AFTER** handling raw meat, poultry, or fish.
2. Remove from freezer storage only the amount of meat, poultry, or fish needed for 1 day's use.
3. It is best to thaw frozen meat, poultry, or fish in the refrigerator at 40 °F. **Do NOT** thaw raw meat, poultry, or fish at room temperature or in warm water. Meats defrosted in the microwave should be cooked immediately after thawing. Some areas of the food may become warm and begin to cook during microwaving. Holding partially cooked food is not recommended because any bacteria present will not have been destroyed.
4. To shorten thawing time in the refrigerator, remove packages of meat, poultry, or fish from the carton and thaw in the original wrapper. If not individually wrapped, cover loosely or wrap. For easy handling, place blocks or packages of meat, poultry, or fish on trays. Place trays on **BOTTOM** shelves and space so that air can circulate around the frozen food.
5. **NEVER** allow raw meat, poultry, or fish drippings to come in contact with other foods.
6. Thaw fish in the refrigerator allowing about 18-24 hours per pound.
7. If fish fillets or fish steaks will be breaded or stuffed, they should be thawed first.
8. Thaw meat cuts or poultry (except turkeys weighing 16 pounds or more) in the refrigerator overnight (16 to 24 hours).
9. Thaw whole turkeys weighing 16 pounds or more in the refrigerator for 2 to 3 days.
10. As soon as whole poultry is pliable enough to remove giblets from cavity, proceed as described in the next section, "Pre-preparation of Ready-To-Cook (Fresh or Thawed) Poultry."
11. Cook thawed poultry and giblets promptly.
12. Cook thawed meat, poultry, or fish immediately or cover loosely with waxed paper, freezer bag, or plastic wrap. Refrigerate at 40 °F.
13. **Do NOT** hold thawed meat, poultry, or fish for longer than 24 hours before cooking.
14. **Do NOT** refreeze thawed meat, poultry, or fish.

## Pre-preparation of Ready-To-Cook (Fresh or Thawed) Poultry

### Directions

1. **ALWAYS** wash your hands **BEFORE** and **AFTER** handling raw poultry.
2. **Do NOT** wash or rinse raw poultry. Rinsing or washing raw poultry creates the danger of cross-contamination and is not necessary. Washing these foods allows bacteria that are present on the surface of the poultry to spread to the sink, kitchen utensils, counter surfaces, and ready-to-eat foods. Any bacteria that might be present are destroyed by cooking.
3. Use separate cutting boards for preparing raw poultry.
4. Remove neck and giblets, which are usually packed in neck and body cavities and drain.
5. If necessary, remove excess fat and any parts of lung, windpipe, or pinfeathers that may be present.
6. **ALWAYS** thoroughly clean and sanitize table surfaces and any other equipment you have used while handling or preparing raw poultry.
  - Do this *before* and *after* the equipment or surfaces are used to handle cooked foods. (See “Keeping Food Safe to Eat,” *USDA Recipes for Child Care* booklet, page 39.)
  - Sanitize by using the 3-sink washing method (described in *USDA Recipes for Child Care* booklet, page 40) or by using a mechanical dishwasher.

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## Making Sandwiches Quickly and Safely

Sandwiches may be served hot or cold, closed or open-faced. They can be made with many different types of breads and rolls. To add variety to your menus, include breads and rolls with different flavors, textures, sizes, and shapes.

Besides enriched white bread, consider using whole-wheat, rye, pumpernickel, French, raisin, Italian, Boston brown, or cheese bread made with whole-grain or enriched flour, bran, or germ.

Hamburger rolls, frankfurter rolls, hard and soft rolls, pitas, English muffins, tortillas, and bagels all make good sandwich bases. Breads with a relatively firm texture make good sandwiches for eating out-of-hand because they won't bend or lose fillings.

Below you will find important food handling precautions followed by a list of suggested tools, equipment, and directions for making sandwiches. (For information on acceptable grains/breads products for CACFP, see "Section 3. Grains/Breads" of the *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* on the additional CD-ROM included in this packet.)

## Food Handling Precautions

1. Make sandwiches the day they are to be served.
2. Make sandwiches one tray at a time (stacking no more than three sandwiches high per tray), so that they can be immediately refrigerated after preparation. This is important because foods stored in the refrigerator need to reach the desired cold temperature within a short amount of time. If sandwiches are stacked more than three high, sandwich fillings will be insulated and will not cool as quickly as they should. Also, the weight tends to crush the bottom layer if stacked higher than three sandwiches.
3. Handle bread and fillings as little as possible during preparation. Avoid touching foods directly with your hands if tools or equipment can do the job efficiently.
4. Wear disposable plastic gloves if possible. Disposable plastic gloves should be considered necessary equipment. Change gloves frequently to avoid tearing and to prevent excessive perspiration. If you cannot wear gloves, be sure to wash hands thoroughly and frequently.



Always change gloves during or between tasks as needed to avoid contaminating the food. For example, after carrying a tray of sandwiches to the refrigerator, wash your hands and put on new gloves before returning to food preparation. Since you have touched the handle of the refrigerator door, which is contaminated, it is unsafe to return to handling food without washing your hands and changing your gloves.

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## Pre-Preparation

### 1. Have all ingredients ready to use.

- Freeze sliced bread ahead of time. Working with frozen bread allows easier spreading of fillings that tend to tear fresh bread.
- Pre-prepare all sandwich fillings, such as tuna salad, egg salad, or chicken or turkey salad, and have them well chilled. Continue to refrigerate fillings when not in use. Make prepared fillings only in the amount that will be used during one serving period.
- Evenly slice foods such as tomatoes, cheese, and meats. For quick and easy pickup, cross-stack items such as cheese and meat. Refrigerate all sliced ingredients when not in use.

- If lettuce is desired, purchase dark green leaf lettuce; wash thoroughly; separate leaves, drain, and crisp in the refrigerator.
- Sandwich spread (optional): Mayonnaise, mustard, spreadable butter or margarine.

### 2. Allow plenty of space to work.

- One slice of bread or a bun takes up a space at least 4 inches square.

### 3. Assemble all equipment and ingredients at the work station in advance.

- Place within easy reach toward back of table.
- Arrange ingredients in the order to be used.
- Set appropriate scoop (dipper) nearby to ensure correct portion control.

## Suggested Tools and Equipment

Cutting board  
Disposable plastic gloves  
Knives, serrated  
Mixing bowls  
Sandwich bags, plastic wrap, or waxed paper  
Scoops or dippers (sized for portioning)  
Spatula  
Spoons  
Storage pans, trays, or bins

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## Assembly

**The following method explains how to prepare 16 or 32 whole sandwiches (32 or 64 half-sandwich servings).**

**Have the following foods ready to use:** 32 or 64 slices of frozen bread, just enough prepared and well-chilled sandwich filling for 16 or 32 sandwiches, and any additional toppings. Handle bread and fillings as little as possible during assembly.

STEP 1. Using both gloved hands, grasp frozen bread and place slices onto tray in four rows of four each (16 slices).

STEP 2. If using sandwich filling: Dip scoop in filling and scrape level against the edge of the container. Place filling on upper right corner of each slice of bread. With spatula, spread filling to upper left, lower right, and then lower left corners, using an “S” motion.

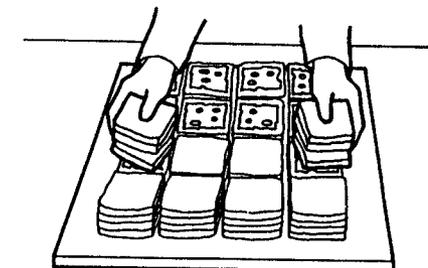
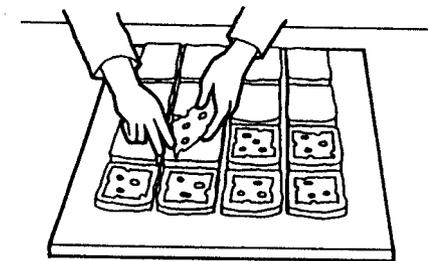
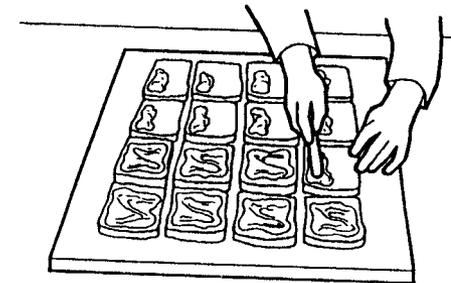
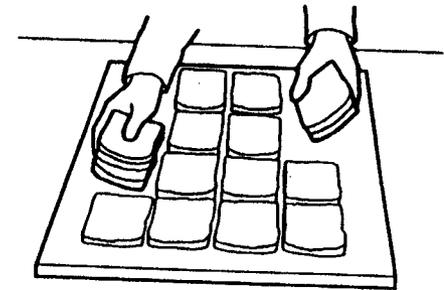
**OR**

If using pre-sliced ingredients (such as meat or cheese): Arrange on bread as desired.

STEP 3. Add lettuce and/or other toppings (if using) to each slice. If you are only making 16 whole sandwiches, skip step 4 and complete steps 5-7.

**OR**

To make 32 whole sandwiches, pick up four slices of bread in each hand. Place two slices on each filled slice. The second slice forms the bottom of the next layer of sandwiches.



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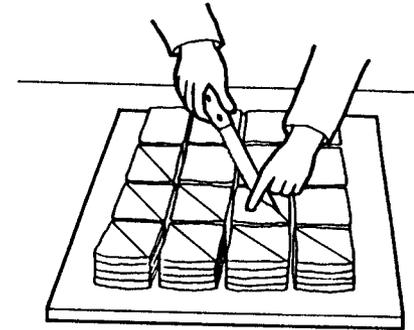
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STEP 4. Repeat Steps 2 and 3.

STEP 5. Top the final layer with single slices of bread. Repeat until all sandwiches are complete.

STEP 6. Hold sandwiches together with the thumb and first finger of your left hand. With your right hand, use a sharp serrated knife to cut through one stack at a time. A sawing motion should be used to prevent tearing.

STEP 7. Wrap sandwich halves individually or place on storage trays. Keep covered and airtight. Refrigerate. Serve sandwiches the same day as prepared.



**This method may be adjusted to meet the needs of each individual food service setting.**

To obtain 50 half-sandwich servings, assemble and cut 25 whole sandwiches. Begin with 25 slices of frozen bread. Place slices onto tray in five rows of five. Follow steps above for filling, topping, and slicing each sandwich and store as directed below.

### Holding Assembled Sandwiches

**It is important to think about food safety as you assemble and hold sandwiches.**

**Serve sandwiches the same day they are made. Put in refrigerator until serving time.**

**To hold properly:**

- If you are stacking sandwiches on trays, be sure to stack no more than three high so the cold air of the refrigerator can penetrate the filling of each sandwich.
- Keep prepared sandwiches covered and airtight. Cover the entire tray with waxed paper or plastic wrap; or place sandwiches in sandwich bags; or fold sandwiches in waxed paper; or place in pans with covers.
- Refrigerate prepared, covered sandwiches until serving time. Serve sandwiches the same day as prepared.

## Guidelines for Washing Fresh Vegetables

### Tips for Washing Fresh Vegetables (for Cooking or for Serving Raw)

- ❑ Just before eating or preparing, wash fresh produce under cold running tap water to remove any lingering dirt. This reduces bacteria that may be present.
- ❑ Firm vegetables such as carrots, potatoes, and squash will need to be scrubbed with a vegetable brush under cold running water to remove dirt from the crevices.
- ❑ Vegetables that can't be scrubbed such as asparagus, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, or greens should be immersed in cold water. Shake to dislodge any dirt, then remove immediately. Rinse under cold running tap water and drain before cooking or serving raw.
- ❑ **Do NOT** wash fruits and vegetables with detergent or soap. These products are not approved or labeled by the Food and Drug Administration for use on foods. You could ingest residues from soap or detergent absorbed by the produce.



## Pre-preparation of Fresh and Frozen Vegetables

- ❑ Before preparing fresh vegetables, cut away any damaged or bruised areas. Bacteria that cause illness can thrive in these places.

- ❑ Immediately refrigerate any fresh-cut items for best quality and food safety.

**Specific directions for preparing a variety of fresh vegetables that are commonly served in Child Care programs are listed below. Feel free to use vegetables that are not listed, bearing in mind the tastes and methods of**

**preparation that are acceptable for children.**

Vegetables that make good finger foods are starred (\*). Also, see “Finger Foods and Snack Ideas,” page 63 of the *USDA Recipes for Child Care* booklet, for suggested finger foods.

FRESH...	DIRECTIONS...
<b>Artichokes</b>	Wash under cold running water and remove discolored petals. Dip into acidified water to preserve color. (One tablespoon vinegar or lemon juice per quart of water.) Cook before serving.
<b>Asparagus spears*</b>	Break off the tough lower ends of the stalk. Wash. If sand or grit is present under scales, scrape off scales. Brush gently with a soft brush. Swish in water. These are a tasty finger food when cooked, cooled, and drained.
<b>Beans, Blackeye Beans or peas, or Lima</b>	Shell. (Scald pods to make shelling easier.) Rinse. Fresh shelled beans should be cooked before serving to deactivate naturally occurring toxins.
<b>Beans, green or wax*</b>	Wash. Trim ends; remove any strings. Cut or break into 1-inch pieces, slit lengthwise into thin strips (for French-cut beans), or leave whole for a different type of finger food, after cooking.
<b>Beets</b>	Remove tops, leaving 2-inch stems on beets. Wash. Remove stems and roots, and peel after cooking.
<b>Broccoli florets*</b>	Cut off tough stalk ends. Wash. Cut florets from stalks. Save stalks to shred for coleslaw or add to chopped salads for an interesting crunch. Florets can be served raw or cooked and make a simple-to-prepare finger food.
<b>Broccoli spears*</b>	Cut off tough stalk ends. Wash. Cut broccoli lengthwise, if thick, to speed cooking. Cut horizontally into thirds. After cooking, these make excellent finger foods.

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FRESH...	DIRECTIONS...
<b>Brussels sprouts*</b>	Remove discolored outer leaves. Wash. For cooked vegetable, cut an X in the stem end to hasten cooking. When cooked and cooled, Brussels sprouts make a no-fuss finger food.
<b>Cabbage*</b>	Remove discolored outer leaves. Wash thoroughly. Quarter and core. Crisp in cold water, if wilted. Shred or cut into 1/2 inch wedges. Serve raw or cooked. Wedges are more easily eaten as a finger food after cooking and cooling.
<b>Carrots*</b>	Wash. Scrape or peel with vegetable peeler. Cut off ends. Chop or cut into slices or sticks. Children enjoy carrots raw or cooked.
<b>Cauliflower*</b>	Remove outer leaves and stalks. Break into florets. Wash. Cauliflower florets make an attractive finger food either raw or cooked.
<b>Celery*</b>	<p>Separate ribs; wash celery and scrub grooves with brush. Trim off root and blemishes. Chop, slice, or cut into sticks. Serve raw as a finger food or cooked in mixed dishes.</p> <p>For a finger food, fill with peanut butter, low-fat cottage cheese, or reduced-fat cream cheese (thinned slightly with milk). Pimentos may be added to cream cheese for color and extra flavor. Well-drained, crushed pineapple is also an option.</p>
<b>Cherry tomatoes*</b>	Wash, remove blossom-end stems. Cherry tomatoes should be halved for easier eating and to prevent choking in young children.
<b>Corn on cob</b>	Husk; remove silk. Rinse; do not allow corn to stand in water. Corn is typically cooked before serving.
<b>Cucumbers*</b>	Wash. Peel if waxed or if skins are tough. Cut into strips, chunks, or wheels. Cucumbers are generally served raw.
<b>Eggplant</b>	Wash. Peel and cut into pieces or slices. To prevent darkening, hold in salted water (1 Tbsp salt per quart of water) until ready to cook. Eggplant should be cooked before serving.

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FRESH...	DIRECTIONS...
<b>Green leafy vegetables (beet greens, chard, collards, kale, mustard)</b>	Wash greens in water as many times as needed until there is no sand on the leaves. Lift greens out of water (instead of pouring off water) so that sand remains on the bottom of the sink. Strip leaves from tough stems and discard any discolored leaves. These vegetables are typically cooked.
<b>Jicama*</b>	Peel skin like a potato, then cut into slices or strips. Can be served raw as a finger food or tossed in a salad.
<b>Kohlrabi*</b>	Peel and cut into match-like strips. Good raw or cooked.
<b>Mushrooms*</b>	Do not wash before storage. When ready to use, clean with a damp cloth or soft brush. Rinse briefly under running water and pat dry. Never soak, as they absorb moisture. Trim end of the stem and slice before serving.
<b>Okra</b>	Wash. Leave small pods whole and thickly slice the large ones. May be served raw or cooked.
<b>Onions, mature</b>	Peel; rinse. Quarter, if large, or cut as desired. May be served raw or cooked.
<b>Parsnips</b>	Scrape or peel. Leave whole or cut into strips or pieces. Parsnips are typically cooked before serving.
<b>Peas, green</b>	Shell. Rinse. Should be cooked before serving.
<b>Peppers, green, yellow, red*</b>	Wash. Cut out stem or blossom end and remove seeds and fibrous portion. Wash the inside. Cut or chop as desired. Can be served cooked or raw as finger food or in salads.
<b>Potatoes</b>	Wash, scrubbing with vegetable brush. Peel (unless serving with skins). Remove eyes. Cut potatoes to serving size. Pierce skins if baking whole. Fresh potatoes are typically cooked before serving.
<b>Pumpkin</b>	Store around 50 °F until cut. Remove stem and cut pumpkin in half. Scoop out flesh and seeds. Cook as desired. Can also be baked whole. Seeds are preferred roasted.
<b>Radishes*</b>	Wash, trim off root and stem end. Cut as desired, or leave whole. If mildly flavored, and not hot, radishes are a delicious and crunchy finger food. May also be served steamed.

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FRESH...	DIRECTIONS...
<b>Rutabagas</b>	Wash. Peel and cut as desired. Rutabagas may be eaten raw or cooked.
<b>Spinach</b>	Wash thoroughly. Cut off tough stems. Discard yellow and damaged leaves. Serve raw or cooked.
<b>Squash, summer*</b>	Wash. Cut off stem and blossom ends. Trim as desired. (It is not necessary to peel summer squash.) Slice, cut into sticks, or chop. Makes a mildly flavored finger food. Can be served raw or cooked.
<b>Squash, winter</b>	Wash. Cut in half with a heavy-bladed knife. Remove seeds, fiber, and peel. Cut into serving pieces. (If peel is hard and tough, soften by steaming or boiling.) Winter squash should be cooked before serving due to its hard texture.
<b>Sweet potatoes</b>	Scrub, using brush. Peel (unless serving with skins). Fresh sweet potatoes are typically cooked before serving.
<b>Tomatoes*</b>	Wash. Cut out core. Cut into quarters, wedges, or slices. (Tomatoes may be peeled by scalding. Dip the tomatoes, uncut, into boiling water for 30 seconds to 1 minute. Plunge into cold water and slip off skin. After peeling, core and cut as desired.)
<b>Turnips*</b>	Wash. Peel and cut as desired. For finger foods, cut into sticks; serve cooked or raw.

## Preparing Frozen Vegetables for Cooking

- Loosely packed frozen vegetables, such as whole-kernel corn, can be cooked without thawing.
- Solid-pack frozen vegetables, such as spinach, should be thawed in the refrigerator long enough to break apart easily before cooking.
- Broccoli spears will cook more uniformly if they are partially thawed.